

## **FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** May 12, 2016

**Agenda Item:** Gold Creek Fishing Access Site Acquisition (R2)

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 Min

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### **Background**

In 2012, FWP was allocated \$1,000,000 through the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) to acquire and develop fishing access sites on the upper Clark Fork River. About \$850,000 of this funding has been designated for site development; the remaining \$150,000 is intended for acquisitions. Starting in 2016, FWP Region 2 plans to acquire and develop the first sites with this money, with a short-term objective to develop two existing sites and to acquire one new site each year. The goal is to add between 6-10 FASs to the Region 2 program over the next several years. Site acquisition will involve fee title purchases, or cooperative agreements with other agencies such as DNRC, BLM, and local county governments. The intention is to provide fully developed sites with gravel access, parking lots, concrete vault latrines, boat launches, fencing, and signing, as appropriate. All new acquisitions would be located between Galen and Clinton, Montana. Currently, there are only two FWP FAS sites in this reach (Bearmouth FAS and Kohr's Bend FAS); neither has developed infrastructure. These existing sites will be included as part of the 6-10 planned development locations.

A small site in Gold Creek, Montana has been identified as a likely first parcel to acquire with the NRDP funding. The site would likely be less than 10 acres in size. Currently the site is owned by a local rancher who has expressed an interest in selling.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

At this point FWP is seeking endorsement by the Commission to pursue acquisition of the property. Public involvement will occur through the usual Environmental Assessment process in both the acquisition process and subsequent site development activities.

### **Alternatives & Analysis**

The Commission could choose not to endorse pursuing the Gold Creek site for purchase. Currently the owner is open to discussing a possible sale to the Department. In choosing not to pursue the property, the window of opportunity may close if the owner becomes disinterested in the concept or sells to another buyer. Alternatively, acquiring the Gold Creek property would greatly enhance public access to this portion of the Clark Fork River, that currently has no properly developed public launch sites.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends that the Commission endorse further due diligence towards acquiring the Gold Creek property for development as a Fishing Access Site. The property is located in a river reach that currently lacks any developed access site. Endorsement will trigger further acquisition activities, including public involvement processes.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move that the Commission endorse further due diligence towards acquisition of the Gold Creek property, with the goal of eventually establishing a fully developed FAS.